

My name is Brian Anderson. I am a legislative and political representative for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 35,000 Connecticut public and private employee members.

Council 4 supports SB 602, AAC Employer-Sponsored Meetings. The recent labor law violations at Yale University Hospital point out the need for such a law. This bill would simply allow workers to opt out from attending a meeting where an employer intends to discuss religion, politics or labor organizing. Similar to the belief that it is not an employer's right to coerce an employee into choosing what religion the employee will adhere to, it is not an employer's right to coerce an employee into choosing whether to unionize or not

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 23, section 4) states that "Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests." Our country not only signed this declaration, but was a prime drafter of it. Captive audience meetings surely violate this declaration of the basic rights that every human being is entitled to.

The Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) and oppressive employers, such as Yale University Hospital, have killed this bill before, arguing that it is pre-empted by federal law. Yet, Fred Feinstein, the former General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board, argues that federal law would not pre-empt this bill.

Council 4 supports SB 601, AA Mandating Employers to Provide Paid Sick Leave To Employees. The Institute for Women's Policy Research estimates that only 60% of Connecticut's workers have sick leave. That means that over 655 thousand workers in our state do not.

When workers report to work sick, there is a good chance that they may spread the sickness. This makes even more workers sick and risks spreading the illness to even more people. This is a particular problem when these workers are in service industry jobs such as working at a restaurant, hotel or retail establishment. A sick worker could unwittingly and unintentionally spread the flu or other ailment to the very customers that they serve. Unfortunately, it is workers in just such jobs that often are not given paid sick days off by their employers. This is a common sense public safety law, particularly in these days when we are repeatedly warned of the danger of global pandemics.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research reports that granting sick days economically benefits workers, employers and our society in the long run. Council 4 agrees. Please pass this important public safety bill.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.